

G. N Balasubramanian- Musician, composer and writer

*“Be strong and supple, be bold and kind,
Be rich and simple, improve the mind.
In joy and pain, with equal grace,
Your life to lead and death to face.”*

-G.N Balasubramaniam

He was probably one of the very few people, besides being a top-notch musician and composer, who also tried his hand in writing English poetry. The same wisdom from the above verse is evident in his classical compositions. G.N Balasubramanian (or GNB) did not compose mechanically. Apart from his journey as a musician and guru, his compositions themselves stand out as exceptional milestones in his life.

GNB composed about 250 pieces, most of them being on his istha devata goddess Rajeswari and some in the name of Ganesa, saraswathi, Sastha and Krishna. The ragas employed cover almost the whole range in use and a few new creations along with the rare ones. The languages he used are Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit.

He also composed varnams which are set in rare ragas such as Andolika, Kadanakutuhalam and Ranjani. He also created an Adi-tala varnam in the ragam Yadukulakambhoji.

GNB invented 2 alluring ragas in which he composed two very fine krithis. One is called Sivashakti, janya of 22nd mela and the second being Amritha Behag, janya of 65th mela.

The composer had immense devotion for Saint Thyagaraja and his compositions. He was always full of praises for the saint's madhyamakala sahitya, which the bulk of his creations form. He made the memorable piece, “Manava kula bhushana thyagaraja” in Hindolam , as a tribute to the saint, which also contains madhyamakala sahityam.

As a vaggeyakara, GNB contributed in no small measure to the field of Carnatic music. His creation of new ragas goes beyond the boundaries of “orthodox tradition” and gives scope and freedom for younger musicians to explore. By creating compositions in known ragas, he has helped the society get the juice of the raga and enjoy the sahitya by not making it too difficult to understand the meaning. GNB's name, indeed, will be remembered along with those of other vaggeyakaras of this generation as Papanasam Sivan and Mysore Vasudevachari.